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SUBJECT AND BODY.

Lacan's Struggle with the Real.

*It is not to his consciousness that the subject is condemned,
it is to his body.¹*

INTRODUCTION

Studies of Lacan's work may start from two different points of view. Either one considers that everything is there, right from the start, and the rest of his work is just one long elaboration of what was contained in the beginning. The standard example of this approach is found in those Freud scholars who include the whole of his theory into the early *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. Or one considers his theory and teaching as a 'work in progress' marked by an evolution consisting of drastic changes. Both approaches can be defended. I have opted for the second one, which does not mean that we will not also be confronted with the first option at times.

From this second point of view, Lacan's theory of the relationship between the body and the subject can be divided into three periods, each one testifying to an evolution in his work.

- Lacan (1) is concerned with the opposition between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The Symbolic determines the body in a predictable way, such that this body is nothing more than an effect, and is understood as a bodily surface.
- Lacan (2) focuses on the Real as the cause of the Symbolic and Imaginary combined; the Real of the body is understood as an organism and as the drive.
- Lacan (3) takes these oppositions up again in terms of *jouissance*: that is, there is a phallic *jouissance* versus a *jouissance* of the body.

With respect to the body, each of these three moments in Lacan's evolution can be expressed in a sentence. (1) I have a body for/of the Other. (2) The Other is driven by a body, which is not the body. (3) The body is the Other. Borrowing from Žižek, each of these sentences can be rephrased with reference to the creature from the *Alien* movies: there is an outside alien that enters us; there is an alien in us that determines us; there is an alien as such.

The breach between Lacan (2) and Lacan (3) is brought about by his theory of causality, which receives its major elaboration in *Seminar XI*.² In this seminar, that the real becomes the Real: its status changes

¹ My translation; original: "Ce n'est pas à sa conscience que le sujet est condamné, c'est à son corps." Lacan, J., (1966). Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie sur l'objet de la psychanalyse. In *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, nr. 3, p. 8. With special thanks to Lieven Jonckheere and David Van Bunder for their help in tracing lost Lacanian references. French seminars are indicated by roman numerals, English translations by Arabic ones. References to Freud to the Standard Edition (S.E.).

² Lacan, J. (1973). *Le Séminaire: Livre XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, 1964. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil.

Lacan, J. (1994). *Seminar XI: The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. Edited by J.A. Miller,

along with the status of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, whose former opposition to each other is replaced by their combined opposition to the Real.

In short, what we have here is a movement from the Symbolic versus the Imaginary to the Real versus the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Finally, an opposition is made between phallic jouissance and the jouissance of the body. It should be added that this last theory does not replace the previous one, but re-elaborates it in a retroactive (Freud: *nachträglich*) manner. At the very end of Lacan's evolution, we arrive at an opposition between the ever-divided subject and the Other of the body. This will lead us to Lacan's thoughts on the subject of the body.

1. THE SYMBOLIC VERSUS THE IMAGINARY “ I have a body for/of the Other”

This "to have for/of" expresses the central idea of the mirror stage theory and is to be found in *The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I* and *Remarque sur le rapport de Daniel Lagache*.³ These two papers contain Lacan's ontology, which changes into a pre-ontology in *Seminar XI*. The idea of a subject of the body, at this point still thought of as the "I" (*le je*), has to be associated from the start to this pre-ontology.

For Lacan, the function of the mirror stage is to set up a relationship between the inner and the outer worlds, between an organism and its reality. This enables a child to acquire a first sense of identity.⁴ The pre-verbal child, the infant, does not possess an organised sense of his body. Hence the fact that the child behaves in an auto-erotic way, based on a lack of self.⁵ An organised bodily awareness and its accompanying feeling of identity is only acquired during the mirror stage, in which the infant assumes the mirror image of the Other, identifies with it "even before the social dialectic".⁶

There are three consequences of this stage. Firstly, the "I-in-the-making" acquires control over the unified body, but this mastery anticipates a real mastery that will never come to be. Secondly, both the I and the body image originate in the outer world: that is, they are constructed in an alienating process. Thirdly, the dual-narcissistic characteristics of this stage give rise to a destructive aggression (it's me or the Other) within the dual-imaginary.⁷

Thus, my *own* body, essence, or being does not play a role here. My body is the body of another. The starting point of human subjectivity has to be looked for in the gap between what the subject is and what it is forced to be by another. Lacan calls this the *manque-à-être*, the lack of being. The optical model elaborated on by Lacan in *Remarque sur le rapport de D.Lagache*⁸ demonstrates how little access the subject has to the reality of its own body. Instead, the body is a surface to be written upon.

THE SIGNIFIED BODY

The acquisition of the body image and the ensuing development occur as a function of the desire of the (m)Other and her demands. Lacan develops this theory through the course of several seminars, emphasising the determining role the Symbolic plays on the Imaginary: that is, the determining role of the Symbolic on the surface and the orifices of the body. As a consequence, every body is a hysterical body, which means, a signified body in terms of the Other's signifiers. If the Unconscious is

translated by A. Sheridan. Introduction by D. Macey. Penguin Books.

³ Lacan, J. (1966). *Écrits*. Paris, Seuil.

Lacan, J. (1977). *Ecrits. A Selection*. Trans. A. Sheridan. London, Tavistock.

⁴ *Ecrits. A Selection*, p.4; (*Ecrits*, p.96).

⁵ Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire: Livre X. L'angoisse*, 1962-1963, unpublished. "Un manque de Soi", session of January 23rd 1963.

⁶ *Écrits. A Selection*, p.4; (*Écrits*, p.94).

⁷ Lacan, J. (1975). *Le Séminaire: Livre I. Les Écrits techniques de Freud*, 1953-1954. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil, pp. 168-70; pp. 176-77.

Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique*, 1953-1954. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by J. Forrester. Cambridge, C.U.P., pp. 191-93; pp. 199-201.

⁸ *Écrits*. Seuil, p. 647ff.

structured like a language, then the body functions as the writing-pad. The mother as first Other invests the body of her child by demanding and desiring certain things - along this road, the child acquires a consciousness of his or her own body and of this desire that becomes "his" or "her" desire as well.⁹

Indeed, in this field of the Other, the subject not only meets with its own unified image (and, retroactively, the ever-present possibility of falling apart), but first of all encounters what the Other desires of this body. Her desire invests particular parts of the body¹⁰ and sets a development in motion that cannot be reduced to a mere effect of bodily growth. Lacan states that, for example, the transition from the oral to the anal drive is not based on a process of maturation, but on a change in the Other's demand.¹¹ In *Seminar X* he even applies this idea to Pavlovian experiments:¹² the researcher thinks (s)he is measuring pure bodily reactions, but it is his or her own question - for the animal this question is the Other's demand - which is central and determines the reactions of the animal.

This part of Lacan's theory is clinically easy to understand, in both micro and macro-social terms. On the level of society, the Other (fashion, medicine, gender roll patterns, art...) not only determines the appearance of the body and, in fact, its very form (from Rubens to wasp waists to Twiggy), but also the way in which it enjoys (food, drink, eroticism). Microsocially, the (m)Other specifically names and determines the body of the subject, also in matters of form, appearance and enjoyment. The body is the surface upon which the Other writes.¹³

The hysterical body, then, is unified, but is also fragmented along the cutting lines determined by the signifiers of the Other. The real body shows itself only in exceptional cases: for example, when depersonalisation occurs, which always amounts to some sort of desymbolisation. In such a case, a part of the body becomes unrecognisable because the signifier has been withdrawn from it. As a consequence, the subject is confronted with the real of the flesh, with something anxiety provoking and uncanny. The very same process can be recognised in hysterical revulsion: if the body (my own or another's) loses its erotic investment (Freud), or its signifier (Lacan), then the hysterical subject reacts with disgust to this emergence of the real of the flesh.

THE ONTOLOGICAL LEVEL "ANYBODY HOME?"

The mother as first Other invests the body of the child by demanding and desiring certain things. In this way, the child becomes aware of its body and of the Other's desire, which becomes "his" or "her" desire. "It is exactly at that moment that the human being's consciousness, in the form of self-consciousness, distinguishes itself".¹⁴ Thus, so-called self-consciousness is deceptive right from the start, because it originates outside the self. As a result, Lacan considers the main function of the ego to be misjudgement (*méconnaissance*), because so-called self-knowledge, knowledge of one's "own" desire, is always inspired by the Other. Both the awareness of one's "own" body and one's "own" desire originate in the outer world. Furthermore, both of them amount to the same thing: "It is insofar as his desire has gone over to the other side that he assimilates himself to the body of the other and recognises himself as body".¹⁵

Thus considered, "self"-awareness is rooted in the body image coming from the Other.¹⁶ The core of human identity comes from outside, and this leads to a strange ontology in which the idea of alienation plays a central role. This ontological theory receives its full elaboration in *Seminar XI*,

⁹ *Seminar 1*, pp. 146-47; (*Le Séminaire, livre I*, p. 169).

¹⁰ Lacan, J. (1991). *Le Séminaire Livre: VIII. Le Transfert 1960-61*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 255.

¹¹ *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 164.

¹² *Le Séminaire, livre X*, unpublished, session of 12 December 1962.

¹³ This idea persists throughout the whole of Lacan's work, cfr. For example, "(...) notre présence de corps animal qui est le premier lieu où mettre des inscriptions" (Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire: Livre XII. Problèmes cruciaux pour la fantasmie*, 1966-1967, unpublished. Session of May 10th 1967; my translation: "(...) our presence of animal body which is the first place to put inscriptions on").

¹⁴ *Seminar 1*, p. 147; (*Le Séminaire, livre I*, p. 169).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Le Séminaire, livre X*, unpublished, session of 12 December 1962.

where the "formation of the I" as an effect of the acquisition of the unified body is rethought in terms of the "advent of the subject". Each divided subject is in this sense originally a subject of the body, albeit the Other's body. To paraphrase Rimbaud: "I is another (body)" (*Je est un autre*).

So, just as our body image and awareness come from the outside, our "self"-awareness comes from the Other. This theory contains an important assumption: it presupposes an inner emptiness, a lack, which can be filled by something coming from outside. This idea of lack is central to Lacan's theory right from the start, and it is elaborated on in a very important way in his further development. In this elaboration, Lacan's return to Freud changes into something new.

PSYCHOANALYTIC SPECIFICATIONS: PHALLUS, LACK AND CASTRATION

All the above can more or less be understood from a psychological point of view and is not specifically psychoanalytic, let alone specifically Lacanian.

The psychoanalytic aspect comes into play when we combine the above with the Lacanian concept of the phallus, which also involves his theories of castration and separation. The central idea in all of this is the notion of lack.

This notion is first given an extensive treatment in *Seminar IV*.¹⁷ Lacan argues that the development of the relationship between mother and child cannot be reduced to a simple process of maturation focusing on a series of alternating libidinal objects. Instead Lacan argues that this development takes place on the basis of a lack of a central object. In this seminar, he understands this central lack to be the phallus, the symbolic phallus which lacks by definition and thus causes an ever-shifting exchange between child, mother and father.

This theory remains virtually unchanged until *Seminar XI*. For example, in *Seminar VIII*, Lacan claims that the relationship between the phallus and the body is a central one, because this relationship determines the relation of the subject to the more primitive bodily parts, which are also interpreted as "separable" objects.¹⁸ This part of *Seminar VIII* has to be read alongside those parts of *Seminar XI* where he corrects F. Dolto's ideas about the infant's progressive maturation. According to Lacan, libidinal stages have nothing whatsoever to do with a natural development; they are retroactively organised starting from the later castration anxiety. This anxiety operates by means of *Nachträglichkeit* (retroactivity).¹⁹

To summarise: the development of the body occurs as a function of the desire of the Other. This desire focuses on the symbolic and thus ever lacking phallus. As a concept, "phallus" denotes nothing other than the lack in the Symbolic as such, which insists between or behind signifiers. In the mother-child relation, attempts to fill in for this lack induce a phallicization: all libidinal stages and erogenous zones get interpreted in a phallic way (in terms of the imaginary phallus) and can become objects of imaginary castration. Freud already took note of this: in hysteria, all body parts behave like genitals.²⁰ Lacan specifies: like the phallus. Hence, for example, Dora's *tussis nervosa* is seen as a refusal of her desire for the imaginary phallus of the father

¹⁷ Lacan, J. (1994). *Le Séminaire: Livre IV. La relation d'objet, 1956-1957*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil.

¹⁸ *Le Séminaire, livre VIII*, pp. 444-445.

¹⁹ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62). Lacan's ideas about the impact of the mother and retroactivity can already be found in *Seminar IV*: "il s'agit toujours de saisir ce qui, intervenant du dehors à chaque étape, remanie rétroactivement ce qui a été amorcé à l'étape précédente. Ceci, pour la simple raison que l'enfant n'est pas seul" (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 199, see also *Ibid.*, p. 41ff; my translation: "It always comes down to understand what, intervening from the outside during each stage, reworks in a retroactive way that which had been started at a previous level. This, for the sole reason that the child is not on its own"). This is probably the most important application of the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*: the phallus as a signifier is so central that it determines retro- and pro-actively the phallic interpretation of all forms of (bodily) loss. This is the core of the discussion Lacan had with Dolto at the time of *Seminar 11*, (p.64, pp.103-104, p.180; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62, pp. 95-96, p. 164). The same line of thought can be read in Freud (*A Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*. S.E.X., p. 8, n. 2). In contrast to Freud, Lacan redoubles the lack: on the one hand, there is a loss of a real object *a*, which, on the other hand, will be processed in the combined symbolic and imaginary ("phallicized" object *a*) through a second lack. As we will see, the interaction between the two lacks is crucial.

²⁰ Freud, S. (1905d). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. S.E. VII, p. 167, p. 279.

This part of Lacan's theory is changed in *Seminar XI*, when he describes object *a* as a lack *alongside and logically preceding the lack of the phallus*. Both object *a* and the phallus are lacking, but the first lack is not without an effect on the second. On the contrary, the phallic instance is in itself already an interpretation of the radical lack expressed by object *a*. From this point onwards, Lacan develops a theory of a double lack, which could be understood as a pre-oedipal and a post-oedipal lack. But there is more to it, as we will see. This double lack also leads to a better understanding of the trauma. From a psychoanalytic point of view, a subject meets with a trauma in those instances where the first lack can *not* be interpreted in a phallic way, where the Symbolic and the Imaginary miss their point and the Real keeps insisting.

A large part of *Seminar XI* is concerned with this theme, especially when causality is discussed. With respect to Lacan's understanding of the body, an important change occurs here: instead of understanding the body as a body image or surface, the body is now understood as an organ.

2. THE SYMBOLIC AND THE IMAGINARY VERSUS THE REAL

Object (a) as the cause of the Other

Seminar XI marks a very important shift in Lacan's position and theory. In my reading, it functions as a hinge between the Lacan of the signifier and desire and the Lacan of the Real and *jouissance*. With respect to the body, from *Seminar XI* onwards the focus shifts from the signified and/or imaginised body to the body as a real organism, characterised by its orifices and functioning by means of the drive.

I will select three themes that are important with respect to the subject of this paper. (1) Lacan elaborates a new theory of *causality*, in which he opposes law to cause. This is the most important novelty, and it determines the ones that follow. This part of the theory has to be read alongside his elaboration of the status of the unconscious. (2) The theory of causality and the status of the unconscious are both directly related to the body *as an organism*. This is discussed in terms of what Lacan considers the most difficult of the four fundamental concepts: the drive. (3) As a result, the status of *the subject* in Lacan's theory changes, along with the impact of the body.

After *Seminar XI*, Lacan studies the drive and the Real as other forms of *jouissance*, in direct opposition to the normal form - that is, the phallic one. This gives rise to a new opposition, one between the enjoying organism and the sexual body which defends itself with phallic pleasure against the former.²¹

CAUSALITY AND STATUS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

In *Seminar XI*, an old line of reasoning is taken up again and drastically changed.²² In the first

²¹ This theme is beautifully explored in Romain Gary's *La vie devant soi*. A child is raised by whores in a junkie environment, and has to make a choice (his desire) among these Others. On the whores, he comments: "Elles se défendent avec leur cul" ("They defend themselves with their asses"); on the junkies: "Eux, ils sont pour le Bonheur, moi je préfère la vie" ("They vote for happiness, me, for my part, I prefer life"). This last part expresses his choice, and there I find an opposition between the other *jouissance* (in my opinion, central in the primal form of drug addiction) and the ever restricted phallic *jouissance*.

²² This was already set in motion by *Seminar X*, especially in the lesson given on 8th May 1963. Cause is irreducible: "(...) pour autant qu'elle est identique dans sa fonction à (...) cette part de nous-même, cette part de notre chair qui nécessairement reste, si je puis dire, prise dans la machine formelle. (...) c'est cette part de nous-même pris dans la machine, à jamais irrécupérable, cet objet comme perdu aux différents niveaux de l'expérience corporelle où se produit la coupure, c'est lui qui est le support, le substrat authentique de toute fonction comme telle de la cause." (My translation: "(...) insofar as it is identical in its function to (...) this part of our self, this part of our flesh that necessarily remains, if I can put it this way, in the formal machine. (...) it is this part of our self taken by the machine, part that can never be recuperated, this object lost on the different levels of bodily experience where the gap is produced, it is this which provides the base, the authentic substrate of every causal function."). A bit further in the same lesson, this cause is understood as object *a*. Still a bit further, we read: "(...) c'est qu'il y a toujours dans le corps, et du fait même de cet engagement de la dialectique signifiante, quelque chose de séparé, quelque chose de statufié, quelque chose de dès lors inertes, qu'il y a la livre de chair". (My translation: "(...) it's because there is always in the body, and due to this engagement of the signifying

chapter, Lacan elaborates on the difference between law and cause, and already here, we find evidence of a shift from Lacan (1) to Lacan (2). In the first Lacan, almost everything was understood in terms of the systematic determination coming from the Symbolic (cf. the juridical meaning of the word: "to signify"). This means that there is a predictability, and the possibility of analysis is opened. He had already demonstrated this aspect of predictability (and thus of scientificity) in his appendix to *The Purloined Letter*.²³ In *Seminar XI*, he reformulates the same ideas in terms of Aristotle's concept of automaton. According to this line of thought, the body is determined in a systematic way by the laws inherent to the Symbolic.

The notion of cause that Lacan introduces is something completely different. Ultimately, this cause has to be looked for in something un-determined, something that is not lawfully, systematically determined. On the contrary: "there is cause only in something that doesn't work".²⁴ Later on in the seminar, this un-determined cause is understood as the traumatic Real, that part of the drive that cannot be represented. The body plays a completely different role here. As a cause it obliges and constrains us to "an appointment with a real that eludes us",²⁵ a real that lies beyond the automaton. This is a real that cannot be assimilated, mediated, or represented.²⁶ Cause, then, implies the idea of failure, of something that does not happen, thus forcing something else to fill the scene.

What we see here is a failure of the Symbolic to cover over something of the Real. This implies that the body, by means of the drive, has a central causal impact on the unconscious as such: "For what the unconscious does, is to show us the gap through which neurosis associates with a real - a real that may well not be determined."²⁷ This real is the drive in its inability to be represented²⁸ - hence its association with trauma.²⁹ The fact that it has to do with failures is found in Lacan's use of negative phrases for it, like "the not-realised" and "the un-born", which echo the "un" of the un-conscious.³⁰

This theory implies nothing less than an expansion of the previous determination with its exact reversal.³¹

dialectics, something separated, something petrified, something inert from that moment onwards, that there is the pound of flesh (to deliver)". On the next page, this is described as: "La fonction du rest, la fonction irréductible, celle qui survit à toute l'épreuve de la rencontre avec le signifiant pur, (...)"; (my translation: "The function of the remainder, the irreducible function, the one that survives every confronting test with the pure signifier (...)"). The conclusion of this lesson from May 8th is that there is a definite relationship between this radical cause and our flesh; it is something of the flesh that is forever lost, thus causing a basic gap.

²³ *Écrits*. Seuil, pp. 41-61.

²⁴ *Seminar 11*, p. 22; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 25).

²⁵ *Seminar 11*, p. 53; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 53).

²⁶ *Seminar 11*, pp. 53-55; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 53-55).

²⁷ In the official translation "la béance par où la névrose se raccorde à un réel" is translated by: "the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with the real is lost forever. (*Seminar 11*, p. 22; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 25-26).

²⁸ *Seminar 11*, p. 60; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 59).

²⁹ Again, this part of Lacanian theory can very well be understood from a Freudian point of view. In Freud's theory, the pleasure principle functions "within the signifier", that is, with representations (*Vorstellungen*) to which a "bound" energy is associated within the so-called secondary process. What lies beyond the pleasure principle, cannot be expressed by representations and operates with a "free" energy within the primary process. The latter has a traumatic impact on the ego (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, S.E. XVIII, p. 67ff). The Lacanian Real is Freud's nucleus of the unconscious, the primal repressed which stays behind because of a kind of fixation. "Staying behind" means: not transferred into signifiers, into language (Freud, letters to Fliess, dd. 30th May 96, 2nd Nov.96).

³⁰ *Seminar 11*, pp. 22-23, p. 26, p. 32; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 25-26, pp. 28, 32).

³¹ If one studies Lacan's work in this respect, it becomes obvious that he struggles with this new idea of causality, and that he has great difficulties in abandoning the previous idea of unidimensional determination by the Symbolic. This struggle can very well be illustrated with one lesson of *Seminar X* (9th January 1963). He starts by repeating the reason why the subject is first of all and originally unconscious: "qu'il nous faut d'abord tenir pour antérieure à cette constitution {du sujet} une certaine incidence qui est celle du signifiant" (my translation: "that we need first of all to consider a certain incidence, the one of the signifier, as anterior to this constitution {of the subject}"). Based on this, one could infer that the signifier is primordial. The next sentence calls this into question: "Le problème est de l'entrée du signifiant dans le réel et de voir comment de ceci naît le sujet." (my translation:

Previously, Lacan thought in terms of "law" and omnipresent determination by the Symbolic³². Now, a

"The problem concerns the entry of the signifier into the Real and the way in which the subject is born from this"). In this, the Real is given a different role and the relation with the body is clear from the very beginning. Indeed, the signifiers do not appear out of thin air. On the contrary: "Ce qui permet justement à ce signifiant de s'incarner, c'est bien entendu ce que nous avons là pour nous présentifier les uns aux autres notre corps"; (my translation: "What precisely permits this signifier to incarnate itself, is of course that which we have to present to each other, that is, our body") This was already acknowledged in *Seminar II*: "Les premiers symboles, les symboles naturels, sont issus d'un certain nombre d'images prévalentes - l'image du corps humain, l'image d'un certain nombre d'objets évidents comme le soleil, la lune et quelques autres" (Lacan, J., 1978. *Le Séminaire: Livre II. Le moi dans la théorie de Freud dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, 1954-1955. Texte établi par J.A.Miller Paris, Seuil, p. 352; my translation. "The first symbols, the natural symbols have come about from a certain number of prevalent images - the image of the human body, the image of a certain number of obvious objects, such as the sun, the moon and some other"). This introduces us to a second theme, in itself also an expression of Lacan's difficulties with this second form of determination: namely, the causality arising from the Real of the body. As long as he hadn't recognised this causality, he could avoid the underlying difficulty implied by an expression like "signifiers furnished by nature". This is a very strange expression indeed, in the light of his theory concerning the supremacy of the Symbolic. There are a number of analogous expressions, which lay the groundwork for his later theory of the body and the Real as cause. Here are a few of them:

- "Le Es dont il s'agit dans l'analyse, c'est du signifiant qui est là déjà dans le réel, du signifiant incompris." (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 49; my translation. "The Id which analysis is about, concerns the signifier, the uncomprehended signifier which is already there, in the Real");

- "Quand nous abordons le sujet, nous savons qu'il y a déjà dans la nature quelque chose qui est son Es, et qui est structuré selon le mode d'une articulation signifiante marquant tout de ce qui s'exerce chez ce sujet de ses empreintes, de ses contradictions, de sa profonde différence d'avec les coaptations naturelles" (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 50; my translation. "When we start with the subject, we know that there is already in nature something which is its Id, and which is structured following the way of a signifying articulation that marks everything of this subject by its imprints, by its contradictions, by its profound difference from natural coaptation"). On the next page, Lacan states that the signifier borrows in matters of the signified a lot from the human body, with the erect phallus as the most prominent feature (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, p. 51; p. 189). I remember having read the expression "le phallus, un signifiant donné par la nature" somewhere, but have never managed to find it again (any suggestions?) In *Seminar VII* we find an analogous expression for the female genitals (Lacan, J., 1992. *The Seminar of J.Lacan: Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-60*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by D.Porter. New York, Norton, pp. 168-169; *Le Séminaire: Livre VII. L'Éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-60*. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 199). The deepest elaboration of this can be found in the opening chapter of *Seminar XI*: "Nature provides signifiers, and these signifiers organise inaugurally human relations in a creative way, providing them with structures and shaping them." (*Seminar 11*, p. 20; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 23). In this quote, the signifiers precede the subject, but nature furnishes them. A few months later in the seminar, this "primary classificatory function" is associated with the biological difference between male and female around which the "combinatory" comes into being and is developed. The conclusion of this line of reasoning is: "that it is through sexual reality that the signifier came into the world" (*Seminar 11*, p. 151; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 138). In the next paragraph, Lacan combines this "combinatory" with the one at work in genetics, including the loss involved in the process of meiosis. Eventually in *Seminar XI*, it becomes clear that, according to Lacan, nature saddles us with an essential loss, that of eternal life itself, and that subjectivity is an effect of this loss.

³² "Thus the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, (...)", (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 104; *Écrits*, p. 319). This determination by the Symbolic gave rise to one of the central ideas in the wake of the Bonneval Colloquium (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 829ff): that the interpretation can be calculated. Lacan sticks to this idea for a number of years, and *Seminar XI* contains several references to it, amongst others his reference to Leclaire's casestudy on *poordjeli*. From a conceptual point of view, this implies that, at the time of *Seminar XI*, Lacan still believed in the possibility of ending an analysis with the final word, the ultimate signifier, although even then he added that this signifier must be an "irreducible" one, and that interpretation ultimately focuses on the "non-sense" (*Seminar 11*, pp.248-49; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 225-226). After *Seminar XI*, he understands object *a* as the not-understandable, the un-representable; his optimism concerning how far interpretation can go disappears at the same time, and he has to reconsider the end of an analysis. The question then is how to operate on the Real if one has to start from the Imaginary of the body image and the Symbolic of the subject: "Comment, à partir de là, nous nous imaginons toucher à un réel qui soit un troisième cercle (...)" (Lacan, J., 1976, Conférences et entretiens dans les universités Nord-Américaines. In *Scilicet*, 6/7, Paris, Seuil, pp. 54-55). Still later he will talk of the "real kernel" of the symptom, which is "le noeud de l'ininterprétable", the knot of what

different causality enters into play, arising from the real of the body.

In order to elaborate on this double determination, Lacan refers to the classic Aristotelian opposition between *tuchè* (the Real, the cause) versus the *automaton* (the Symbolic, systematic determination). *Tuchè* puts the accent on the unconscious as a cause, whilst *automaton* is a way of characterising the productions and the effects of the unconscious, which are determined in a systematic way. Moreover, the two are interwoven and determine each other in a mutual causality, which is circular but not reciprocal.

Lacan's theory on the *automaton* in *seminar XI* is not new. In his second seminar, he had already demonstrated that the appearance of any arbitrary signifier is determined by law. That is, there is a system determining which signifiers may appear at a given point in a chain of signifiers, and which may not. This is important, because it provides us with the scientific basis of Freud's notion of free association. Just think of his analysis of Signorelli, where the appearance and disappearance of certain signifiers is indeed very systematic.³³ During analytic treatment, free association is governed by an underlying determination, resulting in a kind of automatic memory. Nevertheless, clinical practice demonstrates that this process of recollection only succeeds up to a given point, after which the chain stalls and stops.

A second line has to start here, at this "full stop" of the Symbolic. This causal point, "where it doesn't work", concerns what is not realised, what is un-born in the chain of signifiers: the non-verbal remainder, which is what is left when desire has been expressed in the words of a demand. Here, Freud had already met with the repetition compulsion instead of a process of recollection, and this repetition has everything to do with the Real.³⁴ The point where the chain stalls is *the* very point where the Real makes its appearance. The encounter with the Real is always a missed encounter, because there is no signifier appropriate for it. Lacan paraphrases Spinoza: *cogitatio adaequata semper vitat eamdem rem*, an adequate thought always avoids the same thing.³⁵

A "fast food" understanding of this might think that *tuchè* and *automaton* are two merely alternating elements. Lacan's theory is more complex. The two elements have to be understood as a convergence, and this provides us with the ultimate cause. I understand this as follows: the systematically determined chain of signifiers also determines what *cannot* appear in the chain, and thus determines the gaps in the associative chain. Hence, the Symbolic determines the emergence of *tuchè*, of the Real as a negative product of the Symbolic. From another point of view, this associative chain can only contain systematically determined series of signifiers, *on the condition that there is a gap present in the chain itself*. Indeed, within the boundaries of a completely closed system any possibility of displacement is foreclosed.³⁶ Lacan had already elaborated on this function of lack in *Seminar IV* in terms of an object-lack, a forerunner to his theory of object *a*. In *Seminar XI* this lack in the Symbolic is understood as the insisting Real, the cause forcing the chain of signifiers into a never-ending production.

Later in his work, Lacan puts this as follows: "C'est ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire", "It is that which does not stop not being written".³⁷ The chain determines the lack, and the lack causes the chain.

cannot be interpreted ("La méprise du sujet supposé savoir" in *Scilicet*, 1, p. 40).

³³ Freud, S. (1901). *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. S.E. VI, p. 5.

³⁴ *Seminar 11*, pp. 49-50; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 49). In *Seminar XI*, this is connected to transference and love, that is, to the subject's attempts to process this Real (*Seminar 11*, p. 145ff; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 133ff): "the transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious" (*Seminar 11*, p. 149; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 137). It should be noted that in this sentence "Real" would have been a better word than "reality". A bit later, Lacan calls this the point where the subject tries to master the irruption of *jouissance* by saddling it with a "trait unaire" (Lacan, J., 1991. *Le Séminaire: Livre XVII. L'Envers de la psychanalyse 1969 - 70*. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris, Seuil, pp. 88-89). From a Freudian point of view, this is the repetition compulsion, an ever failing attempt to stick a representation with a bound energy (secondary process) onto something that belongs to the primary process (free energy).

³⁵ *Seminar 11*, pp. 48-51; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 48-50).

³⁶ This can be explained logically in terms of Gödel's paradox. But there is a far easier way to understand this: just think of a child's toy like those sliding puzzles. This mini symbolic system works on one condition: that there is a gap. One compartment has to be empty, thus permitting the necessary displacements in the system itself.

³⁷ Lacan, J. (1975). Introduction à l'édition allemande d'un premier volume des *Ecrits* (Walter Verlag). In *Scilicet*, 5, Paris, Seuil, p. 17.

Lacan, J. (1975). Conférences et entretiens dans des universités Nord-Américaines. In *Scilicet*, 6/7, Paris, Seuil,

This convergence was beautifully expressed in the metaphor of the vase in *Seminar VII*. In order to make a vase out of clay, the potter needs clay, but also an emptiness: the clay delineates the Real, but this works the other way around as well.³⁸

This theory of causality permits Lacan to elaborate a status of the unconscious, *which is homologous to what takes place at the level of the subject*: "on the level of the unconscious, there is something that is homologous on all points to what happens at the level of the subject".³⁹ Later on in Lacan's work we meet up with this homology again. Here, this homology has everything to do with what he calls the pulsating movement of the unconscious, the opening and closing of the gap in which something fails to be realised. A typical example of this is provided by a slip of the tongue, but this can be found in the transference as well.⁴⁰ Ultimately, it can be found in every production of the unconscious, the subject as such included. Hence - and this will be very important for our conclusion - the unconscious as such has a *pre-ontological* status: "it" fails to materialise, and emphasis has to be placed on its opening and closing.⁴¹ This movement is exactly the same as the one described above, in which the automatically produced series of signifiers determine in a systematic way (according to law) their own failure, that is, the gap, which in its turn causes the necessary progress of the chain.

Thus, the conclusion to be drawn from this is that it is not only the Symbolic order which has a determining effect. The Real as such also has a causal function, and the two of them converge.

ORGANISM, ORGANS AND DRIVE

In *Seminar XI* we read the following surprising statement: "The relation of the subject *with the organ* is at the heart of our experience".⁴² As long as Lacan was emphasising the determining influence of the symbolic order, the body was thought of as a mere effect, that is, as a signified body, an imaginarised body. Indeed, we *have* a body as an effect of language and the distance created by this language.⁴³ Once Lacan takes the Real seriously, another body enters into play, one for which the signifier "body" isn't even really appropriate. If the Real is our starting-point, it is not the body that is operative, but the organism, or organs. Lacan gives this a psychoanalytic significance by understanding it in terms of the drive and the Freudian division inherent in the drive between the somatic (Real) and the psychic (Symbolic and Imaginary). Again, the same topological border structure can be recognised here, the same movement of opening and closing, and this corroborates the homology Lacan mentioned between the structures of the unconscious and the subject.

At the beginning of *Seminar XI*, we still find a familiar idea: the Symbolic determines the body. Its development is scarcely an effect of maturation, rather, it takes place through the demand of the Other. It is (s)he who demands that the child eats, drinks, pees, defecates, looks, listens, and speaks. The relevant body zones are always bodily borders, orifices (oral, anal, genital, eye, ear) that can open and close, and the (m)Other determines this movement of opening and closing. In this exchange between (m)Other and child, loss and the processing of this loss is central. The subject-to-be tries to answer the Other's desire or lack by presenting something, but this something is never enough. According to both Freud and Lacan, this something has to be understood in terms of castration and the phallus; for example, oral as well as anal loss is interpreted by the child in a

pp. 54-55.

³⁸ *Seminar VII*, pp. 115-127; (*Le Séminaire, livre VII*, pp. 139-152).

³⁹ *Seminar XI*, p. 27 my translation; original: "(...) qu'au niveau de l'inconscient, il y a quelque chose en tous points homologue à ce qui se passe au niveau du sujet (...)"; (see also *Seminar 11*, pp. 20-23; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 23-25).

⁴⁰ *Seminar 11*, pp. 130-131; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 119-120).

⁴¹ *Seminar 11*, pp. 29-32; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 32-33).

⁴² My italics; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 85).

⁴³ The idea of "having a body" is fairly well known. In the later Lacan, this can very well be reversed, and the body takes the primary position: "If there is something that grounds being, it is assuredly the body" (Lacan, J., 1975. *Le Séminaire: Livre XX. Encore*, 1972-1973. Texte établi par J.A.Miller. Paris Seuil, p. 100; Lacan, J., 1998. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XX. Encore*, 1972-73. *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Edited by J.A.Miller, translated with notes by B. Fink. New York, Norton, p. 110); "The being is a body" (*Seminar 20*, p. 140; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 127).

phallic way, albeit retroactively.⁴⁴ Lacan goes further than Freud and considers the phallus to be a signifier beyond the penis. Indeed, he considers it to be the basic signifier.⁴⁵

No real penis, no object whatsoever, will ever be able to answer the demand and the desire of the Other.

Hence the special role so-called "separable organs", parts of the body that contain an element of loss. They are able to function as imaginary substitutes for the phallus. But there is something other at work as well: "In my reference to the unconscious, I am dealing with the relation to the organ. It is not a question of the relation to sexuality, or even to the sex, (...). It is a question rather of the relation to the phallus, in as much as it is lacking in the real that might be attained in the sexual goal."⁴⁶

Almost unnoticeably, Lacan is here preparing for and introducing a distinction between object *a* and the phallus. On the next page, object *a* is described as the ever-impossible representation of a radical lack. With respect to this, any interpretation of the subject in terms of the phallus is a defensive elaboration: "The object *a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but insofar as it is lacking."⁴⁷

This defensive elaboration takes place when the subject interprets separable bodily parts in phallic terms, and if this is not possible, then the subject is confronted with some...thing: that is, with a trauma. Here, trauma receives an operational definition: what is traumatic is that "bad encounter" with the Real that cannot be interpreted in terms of the phallus and castration.⁴⁸ Indeed, to be able to understand a lack in phallic *terms* a defensive processing is required which is not necessarily present when the subject encounters the other, radical lack. Lacan situates this radical lack at the level of the Real of the body. On this basis, the idea of "organ" receives a whole new meaning.⁴⁹

When Lacan puts the Real of the body as cause on centre stage, there is a radical innovation in his theory. From this point onwards, we are no longer talking about the body, but about the organ, or the organism. Lacan introduces us to another lack, another loss which is anterior to the lack involved in the signifying chain between mother and child.⁵⁰ The fact that this is something different, new, and important, is demonstrated by a passage cited earlier: "The object (*a*) is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as *organ*".⁵¹ Here, we receive a first hint concerning the new relationship between the subject and the body, where the body is now understood as an organism or organ.

The Real of the organism functions as a cause, in the sense that it contains a primordial loss which precedes the loss involved in the chain of signifiers. What kind of loss is this? It is the loss of

⁴⁴ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62).

⁴⁵ "For the phallus is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 285; *Écrits*, Seuil, p. 690).

⁴⁶ *Seminar 11*, p. 102; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 94).

⁴⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 103; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 95).

⁴⁸ *Seminar 11*, p. 64; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62).

⁴⁹ Again, this has to be understood in terms of the homology between the subject, the unconscious, and body. Ten years later, Lacan takes up this idea of lack once again, and gives us a perfect illustration of it: "(...) l'inconscient, c'est le réel. (...) c'est le réel en tant qu'il est troué." (*Seminar XXII, RSI, Ornicar?*, 15th April 75, p. 50; my translation: "... the unconscious is the real. ... it is the real insofar as it is punctured"). In this quote, the terms unconscious, Real, body and subject are interchangeable.

⁵⁰ It is not by accident that this crucial innovation is introduced in the lesson on alienation (*Seminar 11*, pp. 204-205; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 186). The doubling of lack requires all previous concepts to be doubled as well, into a logical first and second one. The ground had been prepared for this innovation a long way before, and as recently as the previous seminar, in which the same doubling can be recognized in the distinction Lacan makes between privation (real) and castration (symbolic), although both of them concern the phallus (*Seminar X*, lesson of 30th January 1963). In *Seminar XI*, the doubling introduces an object beyond and logically preceding the phallus: object *a*, lamella, libido. It is very interesting to note how this is analogous to what happens in Freud's theory. At a certain point in his evolution, Freud also needed to double all his previous concepts (repression and primal repression, fantasy and primal fantasy, father and primal father), but he missed the final point: moving from castration to a "primal castration" which is not a castration any more, but something different. (For a more elaborate discussion of this, see Verhaeghe, *Does the Woman exist?* The Other Press, 1999, pp. 149-205). In this respect, again, Lacan presents us not with a mere "return" to Freud, but with something new.

⁵¹ My italics, *Seminar 11*, p. 103; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 95).

eternal life, which paradoxically enough is lost at the moment of birth as a sexed being.⁵² In order to explain this ultimate incomprehensibility, Lacan constructs the myth of the lamella, which is nothing but object *a* in its pure form as a life instinct or a primordial form of the libido.⁵³ This idea refers back to a biological fact: non-sexual reproduction implies in principle the possibility of eternal life (single-celled organisms and clones), whereas sexual reproduction implies in principle the death of the individual. Each organism wants to undo this loss and tries to return to the previous state of non-sexual being. Already in Freud's work, this was the basic characteristic of the drive - the life and death drives. In Lacan's work, the "dead" aspect of the death drive is easier to grasp: indeed, a return to eternal life necessarily implies the death of the sexed individual. It is important to remark that at this stage, we are talking about *the* drive, prior to any form of "genderisation" and the accompanying conversion into partial drives, meaning: phallic drives.

The reaction to this primordial loss - the attempt to return and its defensive elaboration - takes place on the Symbolic and Imaginary levels, which are also where sexualisation and genderisation occur. Again, it should be pointed out that sexualisation is a "phallicization". This means that the first, real lack is "answered" as if it was the second lack, the one in the Symbolic.⁵⁴ Thus, the primordial loss on the level of the organism is re-interpreted as a phallic lack in the relation between subject and Other. Object *a* gets associated with bodily borderlines, the orifices through which other losses take place.⁵⁵ Moreover, this phallic interpretation of object *a* implies that this original lack and loss is introduced, by way of the mother-child relationship, into the man-woman relationship; this is the effect of the passage through Oedipus.⁵⁶ From this point onwards, drive becomes a partial drive, containing an ever-present mixture of the life and death drives.

As a result, we end up with an interaction between elements in a circular but not reciprocal

⁵² *Seminar 11*, p. 205; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 187).

⁵³ From what precedes and follows in *Seminar XI*, we can deduce that this lost "organ", this mythical lamella, is Lacan's interpretation of the libido, which is to be understood as a pure life instinct, and not as a drive (*Seminar 11*, p. 187; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 171). A bit earlier, he had already situated this libido at a topologically very important place when he presented his audience with the first version of the "interior eight" (*Seminar 11*, pp. 155-156; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 142-43). In this figure the libido is situated at the intersection between the two circles, between the field in which the unconscious is developed and the field of reality. Between, and thus in an empty space. In other words, the libido is just another name for the lack that causes desire. This tallies perfectly with an earlier definition of object *a*: " - this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, (...)" (*Seminar 11*, p. 180; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 164). Libido, object *a*, and separable bodily parts are all thrown together here. The later version of this interior eight must be studied together with the schematic representation of alienation and separation. Both of them represent the same thing. (*Seminar 11*, p. 211; p. 271; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 192, p. 244). The reasoning behind this is even more difficult to follow when Lacan adds that the libido is not a real but a false organ, to be situated against the background of the Real (*Seminar 11*, p. 196; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 179). In order to explain this, he constructs his myth, which is at the same time a farce. Imagine that, each time the membranes are broken through at the moment of birth, something - the lamella - flies away and gets lost forever. This loss is none other than the loss of pure life in itself, of immortality (*Seminar 11*, pp. 197-98; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 179-180). We meet here with the primordial loss, on which the subject will graft a secondary and thus defensive lack. This primordial lack has everything to do with what a "gendered" organism loses precisely because it has acquired a gender. It is what "the living being" loses by being subjected to the cycle of sexual reproduction: eternal life. Object *a* presents us with an ever impossible representation of that part. Of the individual that is lost at birth (for instance, the placenta) (*Seminar 11*, pp. 103-104; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp. 95-96).

⁵⁴ The first {the lack in the chain of signifiers} emerges from the central defect around which the dialectic of the advent of the subject to his own being in the relation to the Other turns - by the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and that the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other. This lack takes up the other lack, which is the real, earlier lack, to be situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say at sexed reproduction" (*Seminar 11*, pp. 204-205; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 186).

⁵⁵ Lacan maintains this connection until the end of his theory. For instance: "Le facteur commun du (*a*), c'est d'être lié aux orifices du corps" (*Seminar XVIII, D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, unpublished, lesson of 21st January 1975; my translation: "The common factor in (*a*), is the fact that it is connected to the orifices of the body").

⁵⁶ *Seminar 11*, p. 64, pp. 103-104, p. 180; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 62, pp. 95-96, p. 164).

determination.⁵⁷ The loss at the level of the Real is the cause by means of which life is turned into one elongated, elaborate attempt to return to eternal life. This attempt receives an elaboration at another level, in the verbal relationship between mother and child; and even later on, at a third level, between man and woman.

In this process, the original lack gets re-interpreted in phallic terms. This attempt to return takes place within the Symbolic and the Imaginary, which means that it is determined in a systematic way (*automaton*) and that it will inevitably run into the original lack in the Real (*tuchè*). The automatic chain can never produce an adequate answer because of a structural incompatibility. This in itself forces the chain into further production, etc.

This interaction between the Real of the organism as cause of the Symbolic (determining the body image) which, in turn, determines the (re)appearance of the Real, can be schematically represented as follows:

**Tuche: loss of (a) – Real
organ**

**border topology
life/death drive**

∃

jouissance of the body

//

Automaton: elaboration in S & I

**body
divided subject
partial drives**

Pleasure Principle

The downwards arrow and the double bar evoke the two disjunctions in Lacan's discourse theory: the impossibility of realising the pleasure principle, and the incapability of joining the enjoyment of the body. This demonstrates the non-complementary character of the system: the one can never furnish an adequate answer to the other, because they belong to structurally incompatible systems.

The above scheme demonstrates the strange interaction between the Symbolic order (governed by laws) and the Real (cause). In the further development of Lacan's theory, this implies that the phallus, castration and gender acquisition are secondary but necessary elaborations of a preceding primal relationship in which gender differentiation as such is lacking. Moreover, gender differentiation, and especially its ever-changing implementation, may very well be considered as a defensive reaction to this primal relationship. I will return to this idea later on. For lack of space, I will not discuss here the relationship Lacan indicates between the causal Real of the organism on the one hand, and a certain form of knowledge and the unconscious on the other hand.⁵⁸

THE PRE-ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE SUBJECT

The becoming of the subject deserves a study of its own. I will only discuss it briefly here, since I have elaborated on this at length elsewhere.⁵⁹ With respect to what we are studying right now, the most

⁵⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 207; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 188).

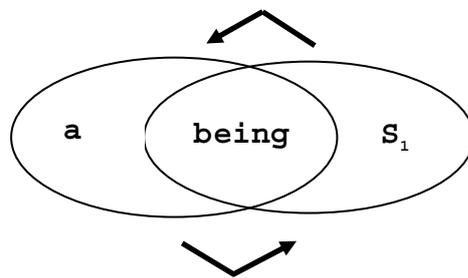
⁵⁸ « (...) qu'un corps a une autre façon de consister que ce que j'ai désigné là sous une forme parlée (...). Ce sont des marques qui sont celles laissées par une certaine façon d'avoir rapport à un savoir, qui constitue la substance fondamentale de ce qu'il est de l'inconscient. » (*Conférences et entretiens* etc., p. 50; my translation: "... that a body has a way of consisting other than the one I have indicated there in a spoken form (...). There are marks, leftovers of a certain way of relating to knowledge, which constitutes the fundamental substance of what the unconscious is about."). See also *Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 102, where the idea of a "*savoir sans tête*", a headless knowledge, is mentioned. This, of course, evokes " *sujet acéphale*", the headless subject.

⁵⁹ See: P. Verhaeghe, *Causation and Destitution of a Pre-ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject*. In Nobus, D. (ed.), 1998, *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psycho-analysis*. London, Rebus Press, pp. 164-189.

important thing is the already mentioned homologous structure shared by the body, the unconscious and the subject. This structure is discussed throughout the whole of *Seminar XI*, in terms of opening and closing, border structure, gap, split, etc. Lacan's pre-ontology involves a rejection of any form of essentialism. Instead, what is stressed is an ever present lack and a continuing loss, with an accompanying attempt to return and recover (indeed, to re-cover). The net result is an ever-insisting split. My attempt to describe and summarise this structure runs as follows.⁶⁰

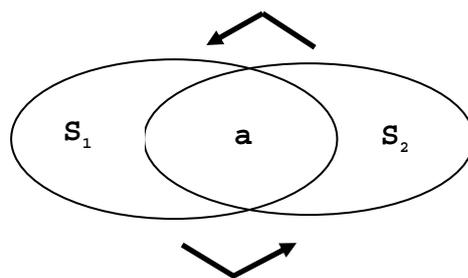
- The advent of the living (*l'avènement du vivant*): the opening and closing of life at birth. This is difficult to schematise. What is at stake here is an ever-mythical origin, and Lacan repeatedly tells us that the questions concerning such an origin are impossible to answer. The advent of the sexually differentiated forms of life is able to occur only by means of a loss of eternal life as such. Any attempt to return to this life can only take place through sexual reproduction, which means that as a return, it has to be a failure.⁶¹

- The advent of the I (*l'avènement du Je*): the opening and closing of the body.



Here we have the primary alienation of the mirror stage. The organism acquires a first mastery, a first identity by means of an externally imposed unified image of the body. This unified body gets translated into the master-signifier "I", to be understood as *m'être à moi-même/maître à moi-même* (to be myself, to belong to myself, to be master of myself), an "I" which has a body and has lost its being. From a Freudian point of view, this is the primal repression and the first affirmation (*Bejahung*).⁶²

- The advent of the subject (*l'avènement du sujet*): opening and closing of signifiers.



The ever-divided subject appears and disappears under the signifiers of the Other in an attempt to answer the Other's desire. From a structural point of view, such a process has to end in failure because the answer can only be formulated in terms of the signifier, whilst object *a* belongs to a different order and is

⁶⁰ *Seminar I*, pp 203-213; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, pp 185-93).

⁶¹ "It is the speaking body insofar as it can only manage to reproduce thanks to a misunderstanding regarding its jouissance." (*Seminar 20*, p.120; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 109).

⁶² Freud, S. (1925b). *Negation*. S.E. XIX, P. 236, P. 239. See also Verhaeghe, P., *Causation and Destitution*, op. cit., p. 177.

lacking precisely because of the introduction of the signifier. This lacanian process of alienation can be understood in terms of Freudian repression and identification.⁶³

Thus considered, the subject appears on the scene as the last instantiation of an underlying structure, containing all the previous ones. In the first instantiation there is no question of a subject, except under the form of what Lacan calls *un sujet acéphale*, a headless subject.⁶⁴ If we continue with this line of thought, it is reasonable to expect a fourth "advent": the advent of gender, the moment at which (a) and the subject are provided with a specific gender. The way in which this happens installs a gender differentiation which is not a genuine one, because it is a differentiation based on the presence or absence of one sex, the phallus. Retroactively, this differentiation determines all the previous "advents", which means that every lack gets interpreted in a phallic way.

In my opinion, this is the complete elaboration of the ontological structure announced by Lacan in 1949 in his *Mirror Stage*. This ontology can be summarised by one sentence from this paper: "In man, however, this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord (...)."⁶⁵ The subject is always divided between something that it neither is nor has and something it will never be or have - *la bourse ou la vie!* (your money or your life). This division insists as a border structure, and corroborates the homology between the structures of the body, the drive, the unconscious and the subject.⁶⁶ "Well! It is in so far as something in the apparatus of the body is structured in the same way, it is because of the topological unity of the gaps in play, that the drive assumes its role in the functioning of the unconscious".⁶⁷

This structure summarises Lacan's new theory on the relationship between the subject and the body, which offers us something different from the classical gap usually put into place between body and soul. The most striking expression of this comes from *Seminar X*: "[The lack] is radical for the constitution itself of subjectivity (...). This is what I would like to express in this formula: "From the moment that it knows itself, from the moment that something from the Real comes to knowledge, there is something lost. And the most certain way to approach this lost something, is to consider it as a part of the body." ⁶⁸

What follows from this lack - the constitution of subjectivity - has everything to do with the basic characteristic of the drive. Every drive aims at reinstalling a lost original situation, but owing to the internal split, there is a failure that is structurally determined beforehand - there is no relationship. Replying with signifiers to (a) has to fail; replying with sexual reproduction to the loss of eternal life also has to fail. Moreover, such answers determine in themselves a renewed cause of a loss and lack, which in its turn determines new answers - *tuchè* and *automaton* all over. *Encore, encore !*

Jouissance is the driving force in all these attempts to return to a previous level.

3. THE LACAN OF THE JOUISSANCE

The body as Other

When Lacan develops his new theory on determinism and causality, his theory on enjoyment also changes. In his previous work, he had already mentioned that there is a jouissance beyond the pleasure principle. Now, jouissance is attributed to the body as *organism*. After *Seminar XI*, this jouissance is given

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "This articulation leads us to make of the manifestation of the drive the mode of a headless subject, for everything is articulated in it in terms of tension, and has no relation to the subject other than one of topological community." (*Seminar 11*, p.181; *Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165). The topological community is again the border structure with the movement of opening and closing.

⁶⁵ *Écrits. A selection*, p. 4; (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 96).

⁶⁶ This idea of an underlying topological structure of gaps, borders, and rims, is without doubt one of the central ideas of *Seminar XI*, and is present from the beginning, when Lacan discusses the unconscious, to the end, when he discusses the drive and the transference. For two other important passages, see *Seminar 11*, p. 200 and pp. 206-207; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 182 and pp. 188-89).

⁶⁷ *Seminar 11*, p. 181; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p. 165)

⁶⁸ *Seminar X*, Lesson of 30th January 1963, my translation; original: « [Le manque] est radical à la constitution même de la subjectivité (...). Ce que (...) j'aimerais énoncer en cette formule: 'Dès que ça se sait, que quelque chose du Réel vient au savoir, il y a quelque chose de perdu; et la façon la plus certaine d'approcher ce quelque chose de perdu, c'est de le concevoir comme un morceau du corps' ».

even more attention. A new opposition arises between phallic jouissance and the jouissance of the body. The first one has everything to do with the partial drive. We will interpret the second one in terms of a more fundamental opposition: the one between the life and death drive.

Right from the start of *Seminar XI*, Lacan warns us that the drive is the most difficult concept of all the "four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis", and that it can only be studied at the end.⁶⁹

He states that repetition and remembering - the *automaton* conceived of as the systematic determinism of the Symbolic - succeed only up to a certain point, a certain border with the Real.⁷⁰ This Real is the drive as something which cannot be represented, symbolised,⁷¹ as something which is "originally unwelcome".⁷² Hence trauma, drive and the Real are all associated with each other, and they all operate against the pleasure principle; the Real is "the obstacle to the pleasure principle".⁷³

Beyond the *automaton* and the systematic determination by the Symbolic awaits the Real of the drive as *tuchè*, as a causal factor. According to Lacan, causality has everything to do with drive. Following Freud, he stresses the partial aspect of the drive, with its accompanying partial object. According to Freud, the object is the least important part of the drive (the other parts being the drive's source, its urge, and its aim). This unimportance is explained by Lacan as follows: every object appears in the place of a definitively lost original object, object *a*: " - this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object".⁷⁴ Elaborating Freud, Lacan finds that there is a double loss at work here with a particular internal relationship. The way in which the drive operates implies the same topological structure as the one found in the body, the unconscious, and the subject: a structure that involves a movement of opening and closing.⁷⁵ But the very thing that drives the drive has not been touched upon yet: "What is at issue in the drive is finally revealed here - the course of the drive is the only form of transgression that is permitted to the subject in relation to the pleasure principle".⁷⁶

This quote elaborates on something that was already mentioned several times before in Lacan's work: there is a form of enjoyment beyond pleasure, even *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The fact that Lacan calls this "jouissance" takes him beyond Freud. The most important elaboration of this concept is to be found in *Seminar XX*. In the very first lesson, he already distinguishes between pleasure and jouissance. Jouissance is essentially negative, not subjected to the pleasure principle, not dependent on auto-conservation, and not dischargeable.⁷⁷ The concept originates in the juridical world (jouissance means *usufruct*), and this is by no means unimportant: jurisdiction aims at regulating jouissance. Later in *Seminar XX*, Lacan attempts to make explicit an opposition that goes back to his early work. On the one hand, there is a jouissance beyond the pleasure principle; on the other hand, we have a pleasure within the pleasure principle. According to Lacan, the pleasure principle is a phallic principle, and the phallic or sexual jouissance always stays within the realm of the signifier. The phallic signifier is what introduces the dimension of gender to both sexes, and thus induces a concentration on signified parts of the body. In contrast to this, there is non-phallic jouissance, the "other" jouissance, the "psychotic jouissance", "jouissance of the being" or "jouissance of the Other". This jouissance lies outside of language and thus beyond the gender differentiation; it belongs to the body as an organism. The different names used by Lacan demonstrate how his thinking evolved in this respect. He ends with the body, although it is a body that is a completely different from the body he started out with at the time of his paper on the mirror stage.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ *Seminar 11*, p. 19; (*Le Séminaire, livre XI*, p.23)

⁷⁰ *Seminar 11*, p.49; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 49).

⁷¹ *Seminar 11*, p.60; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 59).

⁷² *Seminar 11*, p.69; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 67).

⁷³ *Seminar 11*, p.167; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 152).

⁷⁴ *Seminar 11*, p.180; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 164).

⁷⁵ *Seminar 11*, p.181; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 165).

⁷⁶ *Seminar 11*, p.183; (*Le Séminaire XI, livre XI*, p. 167).

⁷⁷ Lacan, J. (1975). *Le Séminaire: Livre XX. Encore, 1972-1973*. Texte établi par J.A. Miller. Paris, Seuil, p. 10ff.

Lacan, J. (1988). *The Seminar of J. Lacan: Book XX. Encore, 1972-1973. On feminine Sexuality, the limits of Love and Knowledge*. Edited by J.A. Miller, translated with notes by B. Fink. New York, Norton. p. 3ff.

⁷⁸ In this respect, Lacan's evolution runs throughout the whole of his work, but some papers are more important than others: for example, "*The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious*"; *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*; *Seminar XX, Encore*; *Seminar XXII, RSI*. The final paragraph of

Psychotic jouissance is the oldest name, and accentuates the fact that the psychotic subject - devoid as it is of the oedipal-phallic protection - falls prey to this unlimited, unbridled form of jouissance.⁷⁹ Within this framework, Lacan also uses the expression "jouissance of the Other", but here, "Other" still stands for the Other of language. The psychotic subject is enjoyed by the Other, his body is enjoyed in a total and unmediated way by this Other, and he tries desperately to defend himself against this - consider Schreber, who believes himself subjected, as a woman, to God's total enjoyment. Lacan recognises the same process in the mystics: they too testify to a non-limited, totally invasive enjoyment that colonises the whole body, a jouissance that comes from God. In *Seminar XX*, Lacan calls this an "other jouissance" and finds it in women as well.⁸⁰

Each woman possesses the possibility for this "other" enjoyment because she is not totally subjected to the phallic principle. This is the message of the gender schema of the *Encore*-seminar.

The last names used by Lacan lead to an expansive generalisation of the concept, freeing it from the specific contexts given to it earlier.⁸¹ He talks about a "jouissance of the being", and especially about a "jouissance of the Other". In these expressions the Other has definitely acquired a new meaning: "The Other is the body".⁸² The body enters into play now and induces its own causal determination, albeit one that is in an exchange with the determination that is characteristic of the Symbolic. This is Lacan's theory of causality mentioned above, and it is taken up again explicitly in *Seminar XXII*,⁸³ where the opposition between the two jouissances is given a further elaboration.⁸⁴

This further elaboration deals with the relation between the two forms of enjoyment. This relationship is one of restriction, regulation, and even defence. Sexual, that is, phallic enjoyment regulates enjoyment as such, because the phallic signifier has a restrictive and canalising function. The other enjoyment belongs to the body, to be understood as "the being", as what exists, that is, what stands outside the Symbolic. In our symbolically determined reality, man and woman relate to each other in a phallic way. There is no genuine sexual relationship between two different genders. Moreover, phallic enjoyment constitutes an obstacle for the sexual relationship: "Phallic jouissance is the obstacle owing to which man does not come, I would say, to enjoy woman's body, precisely because what he enjoys is the jouissance of the organ".⁸⁵ Even if one were to go beyond phallic pleasure, there still would be no sexual relationship,

"Subversion" in fact, demonstrates that Lacan already understood there to be an opposition between the phallic enjoyment and the other enjoyment: "Castration means that jouissance must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire." (*Écrits. A Selection*, p. 324; *Écrits*, Seuil, p. 827).

⁷⁹ See *Écrits. A Selection*, pp. 209-216 (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 568-578). Best paper to be read in this respect: S. André, 1985, Jouissance psychotique, jouissance féminine, jouissance sexuelle. In *Quarto*, Bulletin de l'Ecole de la Cause freudienne en Belgique, 18, pp.46- 59.

⁸⁰ *Seminar 20*, pp. 72-77; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, pp. 68-71).

⁸¹ The only application which Lacan doesn't make for this concept, or makes only in a very limited way, is the one that, from a clinical point of view, is the most obvious: traumatic neurosis, in the Freudian sense of the word. Anyone who has listened to such a patient, speaking about the unpredictable states of increasing pressure in his/her body, knows what I mean. Moreover, such patients very often try to cope with this pressure by installing a pseudo-orgastic endpoint by means of cutting and auto-mutilation: once the blood is flowing, the pressure goes down a bit and "it" becomes manageable. This is completely different from the hysterical variety of auto-mutilation, which uses the body as writing-pad, intended for the desire of Other of the signifier. In a traumatic neurosis, the auto-mutilation concerns the jouissance of the Other of the body.

⁸² Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire : Livre XIV. La logique du fantasme*, 1966-1967, unpublished. Session of May 10th 1967.

⁸³ Lacan, J., *Le Séminaire XXII, R.S.I.*, 1974-1975. Edité par J.A. Miller. In *Ornicar ?*, 1975a, nr. 2, pp. 88-105, nr. 3, pp. 96-110, nr. 4, pp. 92-106, nr. 5, pp. 16-66.

⁸⁴ "Le sujet est causé d'un objet, qui n'est notable d'un écriture (...). L'irréductible de cela, n'est pas effet de langage. L'effet du langage, c'est le pathème, la passion du corps. Mais du langage en tant qu'il n'a pas d'effet, est inscriptible cette abstraction radicale qui est l'objet que j'écris de la figure d'écriture (a), et dont rien n'est pensable - à ceci près que tout se qui est sujet, sujet pensé, qu'on imagine être être, en est déterminé." (*Seminar XXII*, lesson of 21st January 1975, my italics. My translation: "The subject is caused by an object, which can only be expressed by a writing (...). What is irreducible in this is not an effect of language. The effect of language is the pathème, the passion of the body. But through language, insofar as it has no effect, this radical abstraction can be written down, this radical abstraction which is the object that I note as (a) and of which nothing is thinkable - except that everything that is subject, a thinking subject that one imagines to be being, is determined by it").

⁸⁵ *Seminar 20*, p.7; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 13).

because there is no gender differentiation beyond phallic pleasure, only "a jouissance of the body beyond the phallus".⁸⁶

I interpret this as follows: the relationship between man and woman beyond the phallus turns out to be the same as the relationship between the subject and the Real of the body, or the relationship between phallic jouissance and the other jouissance. But this "beyond" is not a goal in itself. On the contrary, the subject's first reaction to this would be anxiety, and phallic enjoyment has to be understood as a defence against the enjoyment of the body as an organism.⁸⁷ Indeed, this form of enjoyment implies leaving the Symbolic, and thus entails the disappearance, that is, the death of the subject.⁸⁸ Hence, this is associated with the death drive, which permits us to understand better what kind of death we are talking about: the death of the subject as a subject, its disappearance from the Symbolic. It is at this point that a certain relationship arises between the subject and the body, to which I will return in my conclusion.

Death drive, life drive, indeed: Lacan's theory can be studied from the point of view of Freud's final theory. To be sure, Freud's theory wasn't final at all. Lacan took it up and developed it into something clinically relevant. Freud's discovery of a *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ended with an opposition between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, to be understood in terms of *Philia* and *Neikos*.⁸⁹ *Eros* is supposed to pursue coupling, association, and mergers into ever-larger unities - just think of the ego's main function: synthesis. At the other end, *Thanatos* pursues disconnection, disintegration, and destruction. These almost philosophical concepts are made operational by Lacan. Phallic enjoyment, within the pleasure principle, operates by means of the signifier (Freud would have said "bound" energy, or the secondary process) and provides us with an always limited and thus safe enjoyment; safe, that is, for the subject. The other enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle lies beyond the signifier (Freud: "free" energy, primary process) and amounts to an unlimited enjoyment of the body, at the subject's expense. The repetition compulsion is the secondary process's attempt of to get hold and control of this, in an attempt to install a *trait unaire*.⁹⁰ The first enjoyment is always partial, separating, pressure reducing, operating by means of orgasm, which in itself induces a separation from which the subject emerges reborn. The second one is total, merging, pressure-enhancing (see Freud's *Vorlust*), and results in a symbiosis: the subject disappears in the Other.

Life and death are relative terms here, since it is hard to determine whose death is really at stake. In the case of the other enjoyment, the subject disappears into a larger whole with eternal life at the horizon, the *Zoë* of the classical Greeks. The subject itself is, as a subject, dead in this eternal life. In the case of phallic enjoyment, the end product is always separation, and the preceding symbiosis is broken and can be said to die. The subject acquires *Bios*, a reduced existence.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Seminar 20*, p.74; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 69). "But being is the jouissance of the body as such that is, as asexual, because what I know as sexual jouissance is marked and dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such anywhere in the enunciable, the sole One that interests us, the One of the relation 'sexual relationship'." (*Seminar 20*, pp.6-7; *Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 12-13).

⁸⁷ Again, this idea goes way back. See the last paragraph of *The subversion, etc.*, quoted above. In *Seminar XIV*, Lacan discusses detumescence as a defense against a further jouissance that is refused by the subject (lesson of 10th May 67). In *Seminar X*, his theory on anxiety is related in a very obvious way to this jouissance of the Other. Anxiety as a reaction to the Real, to be understood as the Real of the body beyond the signified, phallicized body. This particular elaboration of anxiety is to be found in *Seminar XXII*, RSI (lesson of 10th December 1974), which in itself is a revision of a passage from *Le Séminaire IV* (p. 225) where he still associates little Hans' anxiety to the real of his penis. In the new theory, this is changed into the Real of the organ beyond the phallus. A bit further in the same *Seminar IV*, Lacan did mention the "caractère d'invasion déchirante, d'irruption chavirante" of the first orgasmic experience (*Le Séminaire, livre IV*, pp. 259-60; my translation: "the characteristic of devouring invasion, of rolling irruption").

⁸⁸ "le chemin vers la mort n'est rien d'autre que ce qui s'appelle la jouissance" (*Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 18; my translation: "the road to death is none other than what is called jouissance".)

⁸⁹ Freud, S. (1937c). *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. S.E. XXIII, p. 246.

⁹⁰ See *Le Séminaire, livre XVII* (pp. 88-89), where Lacan subscribes to Freud's hypothesis that the pleasure principle is directed towards the attainment of the lowest possible level of pressure/jouissance, and that the repetition compulsion is an attempt at bridling the irruption of jouissance.

⁹¹ "Zoë is the thread upon which every individual bios is strung like a bead, and which, in contrast to bios, can be conceived of only as endless - as infinite life" (Kerenyi, C., 1976. *Dionysos: Archetypical Image of Indestructible Life*. Princeton University Press, p. XXXV). "Zoë is eternal and infinite life; bios is finite and individual life; Zoë is infinite "being"; bios is the living and dying manifestation of this eternal world in time." (Baring, A. and Casford, J.,

The relativity of these terms can be explained by the arbitrary allotment of the names: the death drive is actually a life drive depending on how one looks at it, and vice versa, the life drive implies the death of something else. *Eros* belongs to the other jouissance, but kills the individual; *Thanatos* belongs to the phallic enjoyment, which ends in *la petite mort* (literally "the little death", a French phrase for orgasm). Freud was also confronted with the relativity of these terms and found himself obliged - much to his surprise - to associate the pleasure principle with the death drive...⁹²

Conclusion

The subject of the body?

Ever since Plato we have been acquainted with the division between *psyche* and *soma*, between body and soul. Time and again, this division has insisted in the West. It formed the basis for the split between religion and science, and later on, within science itself, between science and social sciences. Not only did every attempt to bridge or neutralise this original gap with a holistic approach turn out to be a failure, but these attempts even confirmed the gap as such. Just think of *psyche - soma - tics*.

A first, widely-accepted reading of Lacan reads the body as a mere effect of the Symbolic. The body is ascribed to us and signified for us by the Other. The body is a signified, which means that it is an imaginalised body whose awareness and "self-"consciousness only come about by means of the mirror stage. This consciousness is always a false, alienated, and unoriginal one, because it is one granted by the Other. The relationship between Ideal Ego and the Ego Ideal through the gaze of the Other is taken up again through the word of the Other, and installs an ever increasing distance between the subject and itself; that is, it installs an ever present inner division.

If we study Lacan's entire work, we find a more complex relationship between the subject and the body, one that differs from the classical opposition between *psyche* and *soma*. The Lacanian opposition is between the I and the body as an organism, and this leads to an opposition between the divided subject and the sexualised, that is, phallicized body.

(divided) subject versus organism

versus

phallic body

This double opposition contains a mutual determination: the one causes the other, which in its turn determines the first one. The ground of this is the drive, and - in view of this double structure- this ground occurs twice. Lacan repeatedly refers to this double structure when he deals with the topological homology between the unconscious, the drive and the subject.⁹³ In each case, there is a topological border structure, along with an opening and closing movement in which something gets lost. The fact that

1993, *The Myth of the Goddess*, London, Penguin books, p. 148).

⁹² Freud, S. (1924c). *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. S.E. XIX, pp.159-161.

⁹³ "(...) l'inconscient n'a rien à faire avec le fait qu'on ignore des tas de choses quant à son propre corps et que ce qu'on sait est d'une toute autre nature. On sait des choses qui relèvent du signifiant. (...) Mais l'inconscient de Freud (...) c'est le rapport qu'il y a entre un corps qui nous est étranger et quelque chose qui fait cercle, voire droite infinie - qui de toutes façons sont l'un à l'autre équivalents - quelque chose qui est l'inconscient." (*Seminar XXIII, Joyce - le sinthome*, lesson of 11th May 1976; my translation: "(...) the unconscious has nothing to do with the fact that one is ignorant about a lot of things concerning one's own body and that what one does know is of a totally different nature. One knows things that arise from the signifier. (...) But Freud's unconscious (...) concerns the relationship between a body that is foreign to us and something that makes a circle, even an infinite straight line - anyhow, those two are in one way or another equivalent - something that is the unconscious.")

it is "double" means that we have to meet with the three main characters twice: the drive, the unconscious, and the subject...twice. Compared to the classical psyche-soma division, what we have here is an epistemo-somatic gap⁹⁴, since it subverts our thinking about causality and science.⁹⁵

I consider drive (1) to be the primal drive, the life and death drive, at the border between eternal life, *Zoë*, and individual life, *Bios*. The accompanying primal unconscious is Freud's kernel or nucleus of our being that can never be represented, but remains isolated through a process of fixation, a staying behind - what he called primal repression. This Freudian kernel is Lacan's Real of the drive, the object (a). The first alienating subjectivation takes place within the mirror stage as a response to this. As a result, a sexless, genderless "I" emerges (the phallus is lacking in the mirror stage), and this is the first master-signifier by means of which an attempt is made to *m'être/maître à moi-même* (to be myself, to belong to myself, to be master of myself). This signifier emerges as part of an attempt to bridge the gap between being and speaking being.⁹⁶ But this only serves to confirm the gap. The first symbol, then, is also a sepulchre, a tomb, serving as a reminder that the subject has disappeared.⁹⁷

I consider drive (2) to be the secondary drive. This is the partial drive, or, in better terms, the phallic drive, which re-elaborates on drive (1) in a retro-active, *nachträgliche* way, via the Symbolic. Thus, it operates at the border of the phallic and what lies beyond the phallic. The unconscious that accompanies this consists of the productions of the unconscious - *les formations de l'inconscient* - effects of a never tiring after-repression, *Nachdrängung*. As a result, the subject comes to the fore in an alienated way, divided by the signifiers of the Other. This second subjectivation is nothing other than the Oedipal complex - "*où se décide l'assomption du sexe*", through which the subject becomes a subject with a gender, attributed by the Other. The first symbol on this level is the phallus, that is, the indication that object (a) has disappeared.

The original gap between the subject and the organism is repeated in the gap the subject and the body - a male or female body. At this point, the "body" that we have is a constructed one, and is clothed with a gender identity as a result of the loss due to chromosomal gender. This gender identity originates in the signifiers of the Other and is deceptive. Indeed, the male - female differentiation that one might expect and hope for is only given in terms of phallic identity: the phallus with a plus or minus sign before it. In this sense, there is no sexual relationship between two genders.

This line of reasoning contains a very important assumption: gender identity is a secondary, and even defensive construction. An original gap, rift, or *déhiscence* between the subject and the organism gets exteriorised in, and therefore elaborated by, the male-female binary. Male and female here have to be understood as phallic-male and castrated-female: a phallic-plus and a phallic-minus. Assuming that there is a relationship between the two, it will never be a sexual one, but merely a phallic one. However, femininity cannot be reduced to this phallic interpretation. Femininity is both phallic and beyond the phallus, something which can be called "other", the other *jouissance*.

The gap between "being" and "Other", between being and sense, is repeated in the gap between woman and man with the very same effect: as much as the subject tries to reach the body from within the

⁹⁴ This idea of "une faille épistémico-somatique" appears in Lacan's intervention during the panel discussion on psychoanalysis and medicine in 1966 (published in *Cahiers de Collège de Médecine*, 1966, 11, pp. 761-766). In this intervention, he rejects Descartes's theory because it leaves us completely in the dark concerning the real body. And the definition of the body Lacan introduces, leaves no doubt about the new direction his theory is taking: "un corps est quelque chose qui est fait pour jouir de soi-même", (op.cit. p.767, my translation: "a body is something made to enjoy by itself"). This is indeed an epistemo-somatic split, because it leaves the classical way of looking at the body-mind gap and introduces a new division - one which still has to be developed.

⁹⁵ To put it briefly: scientific laws are systematically determinative, but not causal; causality is unsystematically determinative, but not scientific, it lies beyond science.

⁹⁶ For "*M'être/maître à moi-même*", see *Le Séminaire XVII, livre XVII*, p. 178. This results in the loss of the body as a real body: "(...) qu'il y a un usage du signifiant qui peut se définir à partir du clivage d'un signifiant-maître avec ce corps dont nous venons de parler, le corps perdu par l'esclave pour ne devenir rien d'autre que celui où s'inscrivent tous les autres signifiants" (*Le Séminaire, livre XVII*, p. 102; my translation: "(...) that there is a usage of the signifier that can be defined starting from the cleft of a master-signifier away from this body we have been talking about, the body lost by the slave to become none other than the one on which all other signifiers are inscribed").

⁹⁷ *Écrits. A Selection*, p. 104; (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 319).

Other of language, the subject will never succeed. This gap cannot be bridged since it is structurally installed by language. And as much as man tries to reach woman he will never succeed. The gap can never be bridged since it is installed by the phallus. Achilles will never be able to join the tortoise, let alone Briseis.⁹⁸ Phallic enjoyment implies an end for the subject who has opted for the male side. Opting for the female side promises something beyond this. Man's impotent outrage at this can be found in a side-effect of the so-called sexual revolution: the obligation for woman to come, that is, to enjoy in a phallic way. Moreover, it can be found in the obligation to come *together*, thus forbidding woman from escaping into something beyond this coming, into that nine-tenths of the other enjoyment that Tiresias talked about. If man wants to reach that part as well, then he has to change into a woman. Schreber knew this, and followed Tiresias, the one who revealed the truth and got breasts.

The references to Schreber and Tiresias demonstrate the mythical character of this dimension, which probably says a great deal more about masculine fantasy and especially about masculine anxiety than about the essence of femininity. Nevertheless, woman takes another stance towards phallic enjoyment and has a surplus value which man doesn't grasp.

The subject of the body? Ultimately, the question has to be related back to the question about self-consciousness, the philosophical question par excellence. The Aristotelian *Omne animal post coitum triste, praeter gallum qui cantat* demonstrates the association with pleasure and jouissance. Orgasm is the only conceivable way in which this gap or *dehiscence* can be closed: a stitching up (*la suture du sujet*⁹⁹) by which the subject joins his own body for a moment along with the body of another.

It is not called *la petite mort*, the little death, for nothing. Immediately afterwards, the gap is reinstalled and the subject is sad. What comes before and after this teaches us something about affect. Before, there is desire and anxiety because the subject has to disappear from the scene. Afterwards, there is sadness because the union with the object disappears.¹⁰⁰ Even Freud considered object-loss to be the empty kernel of depression, and Klein turned it into a necessary phase.

Opposed to this is Cicero's *Omne animal se ipsum diligit*. "Diligit": love without doubt, power without guilt. The cock (!) - "gallum" - crows happily, and no animal is sad. Only the subject weeps. Indeed, there is no *se ipsum* for the animal, only a being with which it is identical, a being that enjoys. Enclosed in it(self), as being.

With this in mind, it should be no surprise that Lacan fights Descartes throughout the whole of his work, and especially his *Cogito ergo sum*. Whereas the good soul Descartes conceives of the gap between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* in terms of an outside and an inside, according to Lacan this cleft is first and foremost an inner one, one that is in the subject itself.¹⁰¹ For Lacan, being (*sum*) ex-sists outside thinking (*cogito*), precisely because (*ergo*) of this thinking with signifiers; being ex - sists, and from this ex-sistent position it functions as a cause, thus taking over the role of Descartes's God. Moreover, this thinking

⁹⁸ *Seminar 20*, p. 8; (*Le Séminaire, livre XX*, p. 13).

⁹⁹ The idea of "la suture du sujet" was mentioned by Lacan in *La science et la vérité* (*Écrits*, Seuil, p. 861), as the goal of science: a stitching up of the subject's division, bridging the gap of the inner split. Since orgasm and sleep are the only instances in which this "suture" is actually installed, this puts the goal of science in a rather rosy light - friend scientists, get to work! See also *Seminar XII*, lesson of 16th December 1964 and *Seminar XXIII*, lesson of 13th January 1976.

¹⁰⁰ This is the main theme of *Seminar X*, which reappears in a very condensed form in *Télévision*: affect does not concern the body, on the contrary, the essence of affect concerns its displacement, with anxiety as its base, anxiety being the only affect that does not deceive. This anxiety has to be understood on the basis of the confrontation between subject and object *a* (Lacan, J., 1973. *Télévision*. Paris, Seuil, pp. 38-39. Lacan, J., 1990, *Television, a challenge to Psychoanalytic Establishment*. Trans. D. Hollier, R. Kraus and A. Michelson. Ed. J. Copjec. New York, Norton, pp. 20-22).

¹⁰¹ "In fact, the subject of the unconscious is only in touch with the soul via the body, by introducing thought into it. (...) Man does not think with his soul (...). He thinks as a consequence of the fact that a structure, that of language (...) carves up his body, a structure that has nothing to do with anatomy." (*Television*, p. 6; *Télévision*, p. 16). The following page demonstrates that according to Lacan there is a fundamental disharmony between thought (*pensée*) and soul (*âme*), in contrast to the myth of completeness and thus complacency between them; the gap is not between body and soul, but between mind and subject. That is, there is always a divided subject, and this entails a division between being and sense. Isn't this the original meaning of Freud's cleft between conscious and the unconscious?

subject is a divided subject who doesn't want to recognise its inner division. It has a handy solution to this: it assigns one part of this division to the signified body, thus setting the standard for hysteria. But this new division is never able to overlap the original one.

Man is not a divided subject, he is a quartered being.